

# Fighting To Win!

**CLASS STRUGGLE UNIONISM**



**25c**

**International Socialists**

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## Introduction

When you belong to a union, you know that the union is supposed to protect your rights.

Sometimes it does. Without unions, workers would have no rights. Each would have to try to protect him or herself against the company alone. That's impossible, and that's why working people fought to build unions and make them legal. In unity is strength.

But today's unions often don't protect your rights. They sell out and spend a lot of time trying to explain it away and make the members accept it. It can seem hopeless.

But it isn't hopeless.

Today's unions are run by big shot, high paid bureaucrats. Most of them don't work the job, don't

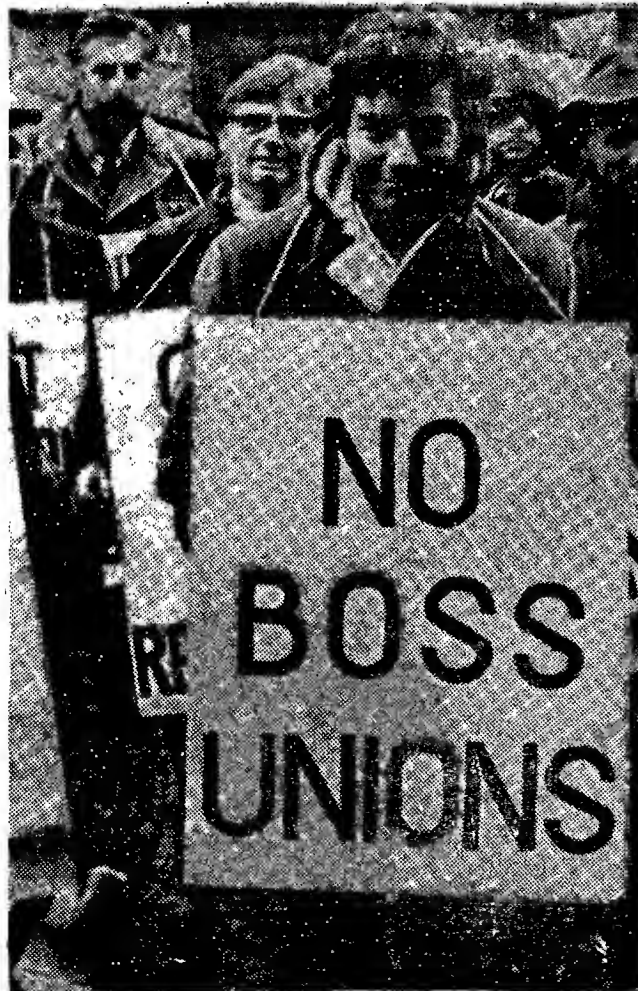


1971 wildcat strike of New York telephone operators.

live with the conditions. The bureaucrats practice business unionism—making peace between the employers and the members.

The members face the conditions and the pay. And they know that the companies give them no peace! They can practice a different kind of unionism—class struggle unionism, that fights back. Through class struggle unionism, the rank and file can make the bureaucrats fight for what they need—or win it for themselves.

This pamphlet explains class struggle unionism and how to use it and win.



## Examples

**COOPERATION** • Leonard Woodcock, president of the powerful United Auto Workers union was recently asked why he was not going to push for a shorter work week, a move that would have saved jobs in the auto industry. Woodcock answered that he didn't want to make big demands on the auto companies when they were having a tough time of it. Doug Fraser, UAW vice-president in charge of Chrysler affairs, agrees with Woodcock about not giving the companies a tough time.

In August of 1973, there was a 30-hour occupation of Chrysler's Mack Avenue Stamping Plant in Detroit by workers protesting health and safety violations and unfair firings. When these workers decided to continue the shut-down by setting up picket lines, Fraser led a squad of 1000 UAW bureaucrats and officials to break up both the picket line and the heads of the picketers. When Police Inspector Joseph Areeda, commander of the Fifth Precinct in Detroit, saw the large UAW bureaucracy turnout, he told Fraser, "I'm glad we're on the same side."

• In the spring of 1973, I.W. Abel, president of the United Steel Workers Union, concluded what he called



Leonard Woodcock



I.W. Abel



I.W. Abel selling out steelworkers. Here Abel shakes hands with a vice president of US Steel.

an "experimental negotiating agreement (ENA)" for steel workers which gave them a \$150 bonus, but took away their right to strike for 4 years. Rank and file members were told, not asked, about this "great deal"—they were never even allowed to vote on it.

The Wall Street Journal, a business publication, called ENA "this fundamental improvement in the industry" and "a fantastic way to buy off a strike." Abel's explanation was that the no-strike deal was necessary to make American steel competitive with foreign imported steel. Thus, Abel explained, he was just saving jobs for American steel workers.

But since this "landmark agreement" in 1973, over 150,000 jobs in American steel have been lost. And the no-strike deal has recently been extended by Abel till 1980!

- In an interview last year with Long Lines Magazine, a magazine put out by the management of Bell Telephone Company, Glenn Watts, president of the Communication Workers of America, was asked his opinion of the 4-day work week. "We really shouldn't be thinking about shorter work weeks at this time," Watts explained, "we ought to be working more and producing more." Meanwhile, thousands of telephone workers are being laid off for the first time since the 1930's.

- In 1974 independent truck drivers struck over increasing fuel costs. Frank Fitzsimmons, president of the Teamsters Union, condemned the strikers for "perpetrating acts of murder, violence and intimidat-

tion." He urged government officials to crack down on the strikers and not to "kow-tow to those who perpetrate violence and lawlessness." Meanwhile, nobody yet knows what's become of Jimmy Hoffa, and Fitz is keeping mum.

**CONFRONTATION** • Woodcock and Abel and all the other big-shots are not the only people in the trade union movement in this country, of course. There are also people like Larry Carter and Isaac Shorter. These two production workers started a one-day sitdown strike at Chrysler's Jefferson Avenue Assembly Plant in Detroit in July 1973. Carter



Carter and Shorter celebrating victory with fellow workers

and Shorter locked themselves inside the factory's power "cage" and turned off the electricity, shutting down key production lines. A thousand other workers surrounded them in the "cage" to protect them. The strikers demanded that a particularly vicious racist foreman be fired, and that a written guarantee of amnesty be given all workers involved in the sit-down. Thirteen hours later, Chrysler management surrendered unconditionally, granting all demands in writing.

- And there are people like the members of CWA Local 4301, who work for Ohio Bell telephone in Cleveland. Just this past June, almost 1000 of them walked out in a wildcat strike to save Julius Golden's job. Golden, 58 years old, had worked for the phone company for 28 years. Then just two years before his retirement, Ma Bell tried to demote him to a lower-paying job to save money on the pension benefits the company would soon be paying him. Telephone workers all over Cleveland heard about Golden's case, and walked off their jobs in protest. As a result, Julius Golden is going to get the pension he earned.

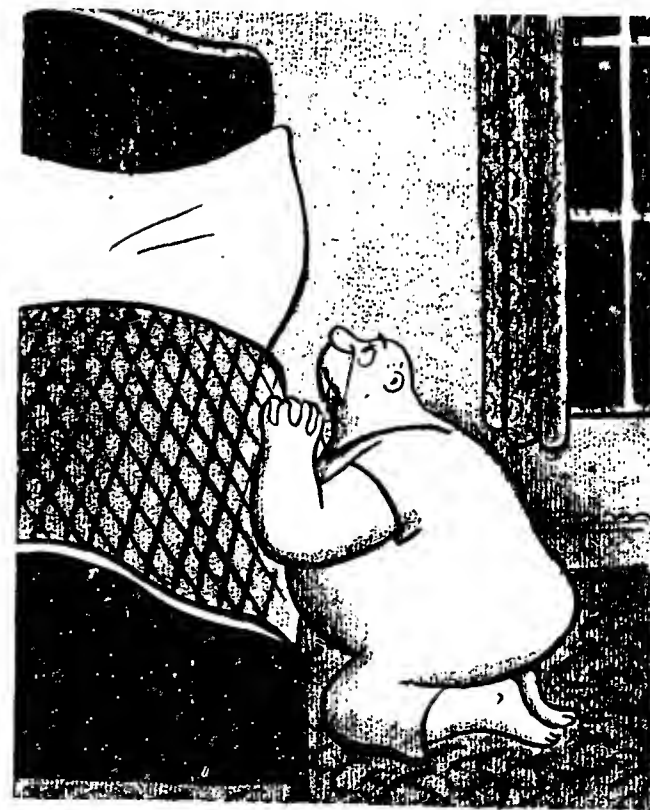


Cleveland CWA members striking to save a fellow worker's job.

- Taking a different approach from their union president, I.W. Abel, the members of United Steelworkers Local 2163, at the Youngstown Sheet and Tube Works in Campbell, Ohio, went out on strike in February 1975. Management had decided to eliminate 18 jobs. The rank and file, 5800 strong, stayed out together solidly. After 6 days, management backed down. The jobs went back on schedule. Jobs were saved for steel workers, no thanks to Abel and his no-strike deal.

- In April of this year, miners in Powhatan, Ohio went out on a wildcat strike for seven weeks against the North American Coal Company. With roving pickets, they spread the strike through Ohio and West Virginia. The issue was safety: the company wanted to eliminate the jobs of certain safety observers in charge of roof-bolting machines. Ignoring the advice of their union officials who consistently argued for compromise, the miners stayed solid, stayed out, and won. Now there will be safety observers on duty at all times the machines are operating.

These are all real incidents, important by themselves. But what is most important about them is the patterns we can see in them. These examples make clear that these are two very different approaches to what a union is and what it's for.



"And please don't let them sit down in my factory"





Leading AFL-CIO bureaucrat George Meany and his buddy Gerald Ford. Meany and Ford agree on one thing—that business interests are more important than the workers' interests.

## Fighting To Win

### "COOPERATION" OR CONFRONTATION?

The most basic difference in approaches to trade unionism is how you feel about the interests of the owners and the interests of the workers. Woodcock and Abel and the rest of the American "labor statesmen" feel that the well-being of the company is what guarantees the well-being of the workers. To them, the company is "the goose that lays the golden egg" and rank and file union members can't afford to kill that goose by demanding too many things "the company can't afford," they will tell you. This is all lies, of course. The only "golden eggs" this kind of goose lays is profits for the stockholders, not the workers. Nonetheless, mutual interest and **cooperation** is the main slogan of this approach, and it's the approach used by the leaders of almost every one of the 180 national and international unions in America today. this is **Business Unionism**.

The results of this sort of "business unionism" are clear for the millions of workers who make up the membership of the unions. In the past few years, real wages—what you get after taxes and inflation—have fallen back to the 1964 level. Dozens of "job-saving" productivity agreements, smaller wage demands, and other examples of "labor statesmanship," have left us with an unemployment rate of nearly 9%—with little expectation from the government of union leaders that it will go much below 7-8%. In many industries, productivity deals have meant the permanent loss of thousands of jobs.

The most shocking is the no-strike pledge in the steel industry. But other industries like auto, telephone, rubber, longshore, and the post office have also lost jobs through the union leaders' concessions on working conditions and production speed. Giving in to management productivity or speed of work means not



only a loss of jobs, but also deteriorating working conditions and health and safety standards. Deaths in the coal mines are up this year. Accidents in the steel industry have grown. In industry after industry, company after company, speed up and harassment have become the norm.

Now, those steel workers in Youngstown who walked out don't seem to have spent much time worrying about cooperating with the company. Their approach was **confrontation**—they took direct action against the owners (and Abel, too) and won back the jobs of fellow workers.

This approach of confrontation, of open conflict, is the absolute opposite of the "cooperation" one. The Youngstown steel workers saw that the interests of the owners and those of the workers are not the same, but are completely opposite. They always will be under the present economic set-up. This kind of militant, united action of workers against their bosses is a kind of unionism that understand that unions exist to defend working people and to fight the owners, not play a sucker's game of "cooperation." This kind of unionism is based on an understanding of **classes** in society; it is **class struggle unionism**.

To the class struggle unionist, the people who do the

work and the people who reap the profits are the two sides in a tug of war over who's going to get a bigger piece of the pie.

The business unionist says that because the owner invests capital into a factory, the owner has the right to control it and the people who work in it. The class struggle unionist says that the working person invests his or her whole working life in the job—this gives us the right to determine the conditions under which we will spend that working life.

Besides investing our whole lives, we also are the people who **make everything**—including the owners' "capital." Everything in a plant or factory or office was made by working people somewhere. And working people are the ones who did the work which made the raw materials available to make all those things. Any way you look at it, working people produce everything and by rights should own and control it.

Most important, our needs are always more important than the company's need for profits. In making demands, class struggle unionists consider only what we need and if we're strong enough to win it. The employers see our labor as just another investment—like raw materials or a machine. They want to buy it at the lowest price possible. We've got to fight them to get the highest prices possible. This working class policy is the foundation stone of class struggle unionism.



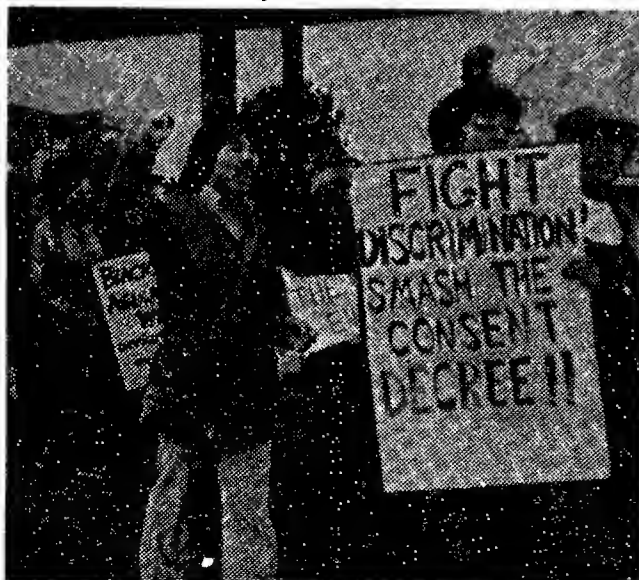
## FROM THE TOP OR FROM THE BOTTOM?

Corporations aren't the only ones who see our labor as just a commodity to be sold at a price—there are also the union bosses, like Abel and Woodcock. They pretend to get the highest wages possible for us. But that's where the problem starts and ends. They (and many union members, too) think their job is to do things **for** us—to take care of us and do what's best for us. Like Abel was "doing what's best" for steel workers when he gave away their right to strike.

The Abel deal is a good example to look at because it shows the strong connection between business unionism and the loss of union democracy. Abel did what he did because American steel companies needed help.

Most other union bosses in America also have a pretty long history of selling out the rank and file. It's not because "power corrupts." It's because they believe they must help the companies make a profit. They know these policies shaft the rank and file and that the ranks might resist. So they want all the power in the union so they can control everything. "Doing what's best for us," really means doing what's best for the owners.

Their control usually takes the form of a one-sided,



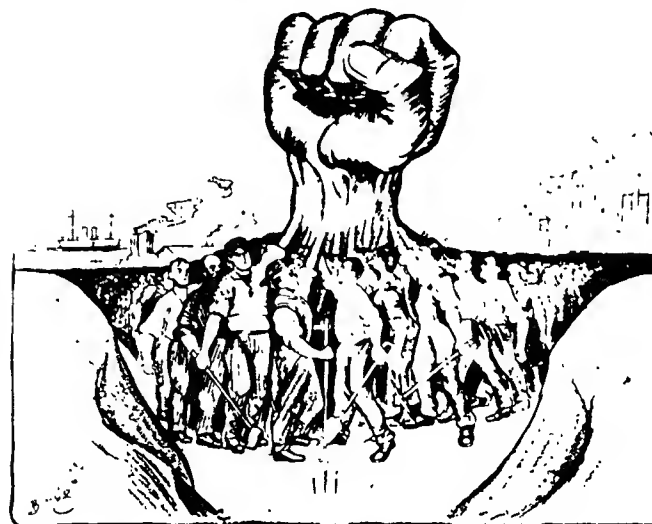
Steel workers demonstrate against discrimination and the 'no-strike' pledge.

one-party union newspaper, obstacles to prevent rank and filers from organizing (including strong-arming), imposing receiverships on "dissident" locals, and even refusing to allow members to vote on contracts.

The West Virginia miners who went on the wildcat this summer demanding the right to strike over safety were not interested in the deals being handed **down from the top** of their union. Instead, **from the bottom**, they organized themselves and took direct action together. The same was true of Youngstown steel workers—they were active, alert, confident, and united; they stood up and fought together, and won.

This rank and file approach, doing things from the bottom up democratically, is the only way for a union to be what it's supposed to be—a way to put all our individual strengths together to add up to a real power to fight back. But we can only do it with **everybody** active and informed.

The class struggle unionist fights for democracy in the union not because it's "good" to be democratic, but because that's the only thing that **works** and gets things done. And it's the way the class struggle unionist builds a rank and file movement which can take back control of our unions to make them fight for us against the companies. A rank and file movement of all working people, in all the plants and offices and factories, all over the country—**every** union member an active fighter, confident, informed, aggressive. Every union



Workers' power is built from the ground up!

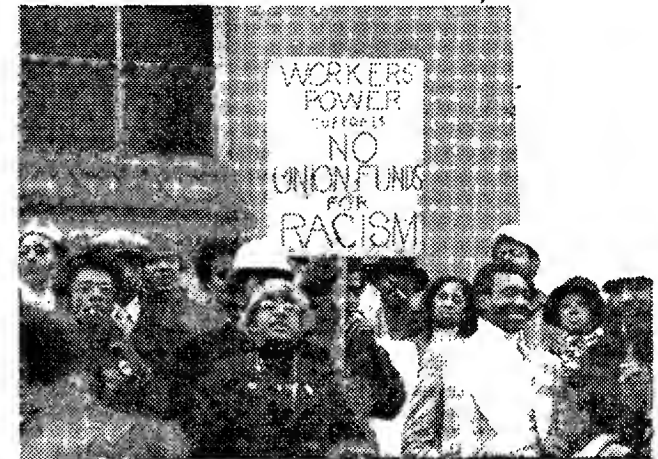


member participating in democratically made decisions and actions to carry out those decisions. A rank and file movement that is **organized** and tight and that will build its own machine to fight against the bosses' machine and the bureaucrats' machine. From the bottom up, we the rank and file, will **democratically** run our unions to do what we decide is best for us.

# **DIVIDE AND CONQUER—OR UNITY?**

The working people who wildcatted at the Cleveland telephone company included blacks and whites, men and women. If they had let the issues of race and sex divide them they would never have made it out the door of the building. They would never have won back the jobs of fellow workers. We can't get anything done—and won't get anything done—as long as we allow the issues of race and sex to divide us. That means facing things like busing, and women's liberation, and compensatory treatment from a class struggle view. All the things people on the shop floor fight about among themselves. As long as that fighting keeps up, the bosses just keep laughing and collecting more and more profits. And the layoffs go up and the wages go down.

Because we **all** work—black, white, men, women. We're all working, trying to make a decent living. And we need each other to win. If we let racism and sexism split us up, the bosses will have divided and conquered. Class struggle unionists stand for **unity**—because unity



is what wins better wages, more jobs and less harassment. But class struggle unity does not say, "Blacks or women must forget what they want until we win what we all want." Because the companies and society will not let people forget they are discriminated against. Class struggle unity says that white workers have to defend black workers, men have to fight to defend women, against the discrimination that the bosses and all of society lay on people. Otherwise, the bosses will continue to be able to hold down wages ("You want a raise, buddy? Forget it, I can hire a woman to do your job at half the price!") and destroy working conditions. We have to fight all kinds of oppression—it's in all our interests.

# **"PUBLIC INTEREST"—OR SOLIDARITY?**

In the crisis in New York City right now, all public employees are being made out to be the villains because their wages and pensions are "too high"—often better than many industrial and production workers in America. The city unions are the reason NYC is going broke, we are told. Before that, back in 1971, Nixon and the Democrats decided to impose "Wage-Price Controls" to hold down inflation. Wages were sure held down, but prices kept going up and up.

Now, the newspapers will tell you that what's important here is the "public interest." "It's not in the public interest," they solemnly announce, "for us to pay city workers decent wages or allow any raises for workers in a period of inflation." And it's not just the



San Francisco city workers demonstrate against wage-cutting legislation, which bosses claimed was in the "public interest."

newspapers, either—that's also what the union bureaucrats and the bosses say, too. All it really takes is a closer look at all those incidents to discover that this "public interest"—which sounds like it means you and me and all the ordinary folks around—**really** is the bosses' interests.

All this "public interest" stuff is just a con game to divide us up from each other—to divide workers in one industry from workers in other industries, to divide unionized from non-unionized workers, to divide public employees from private employees. Business unionism once again.

"An injury to one is an injury to all." That's the slogan of the class struggle unionist. No matter what part of the country or world we're from, what type of job we have or whether we're in a union or not, we must stand together. Every time other workers win a victory, it helps us. Every time other workers lose, it gives bosses more confidence and power—and weakens all of us. Bosses talk about "public interest" and they mean business interests. Our interests lie with our fellow workers. We have to back each other all the way. Class struggle unionism means **solidarity**.

#### OUR OWN

Election time in America—after all the speeches and **POLITICAL PARTY** bally-hoo and bumper stickers and promises and

platforms—always turns out to be a sick joke. When you go into that little booth and curtain swishes closed behind you, you know that it really won't make any difference which lever you pull. Either a Republican or a Democrat is going to win, and working people know that they're two peas in a pod.

The Republicans don't even pretend to be for the workers. They're very out front about being the party of big business, big corporations, and big money. The Democrats are sneakier—they pretend to be labor's friend. They suck up to all the big union bosses and bureaucrats who, in turn, tell us working people to put our money, our trust, and our votes in the Democrats.

Somehow, though, nothing ever changes, even when these Democrats win. Remember, they're the ones who passed the 1971 wage controls. And they haven't changed since then. It is a Democrat, Mayor Beame in New York who is ripping up the union contracts and throwing tens of thousands onto the unemployment lines. Democrat Governor Carey is trying to force through a program to make state workers work five hours extra for the same pay. And of course, George Wallace who has probably done more than any other single individual to divide the working class through poisonous racism. He is once more on the trail of the Democratic Presidential nomination.

No matter what they pretend to be, Democrats too are big supporters of the employers. They are part of



In 1972 Workers' Power exposed McGovern's Democratic presidential campaign for the fraud it was.



"Have we got a deal for you!"

their system. True, they may say they want to make some reforms in it to help working people. But talk is cheap. The actions of the Democratic Party speak volumes. Their actions prove that just like the Republicans they are 100% with the bosses. Part and parcel of the same rotten economic system that always puts the needs of big money before the needs of working people.

Which ever way you look at it, you cannot avoid the same conclusion. In the same way as workers keep the bosses out of the trade unions, so we have to keep them out of any political party which claims to side with the workers. In short we need our own political party, and the Democrats are not it. We have to actively break with the Democratic Party who are not and never can be the party of working people. Our own political party is the next step in class struggle unionism.

We need our own party that we control. A party that will support workers and will fight on issues like inflation, unemployment, wage controls, ecology, war, and Watergate—issues that go beyond what we can fight for and win on the shop floor and in our own union. We need a labor party. But we don't want it to

be a fraud like the British Labor Party. It must be controlled by the rank and file to fight for the needs of workers and the oppressed. And if those needs can't be met by the present economic system, then the labor party should stand for destroying that system.

• • •

### WHO'S IN CONTROL— US OR THEM?

The class struggle unionist—fighting for a working class policy, for rank and file democratic unions, for unity and solidarity, for an independent political party—finally faces up to the big question—who's going to run things, us or them?

In these hard times, with the economy as bad as it is, with almost every company in trouble, unable to pay better wages and still make more profits, this question of "us or them?" is forced upon us. It becomes clear in times like these that this economic set-up doesn't work—it continually produces slumps, depressions, wage cuts, productivity schemes, layoffs. Right now workers at many plants are scared to make any fight at all against their bosses, because the bosses, the press and the union say the company may go bankrupt. To be able to move forward at all, workers in plants like that will have to seek a solution beyond the laws of the present capitalist economic set-up. The IS believes that the solution is socialism.

Working people have to decide: Is this going to keep



Police on horseback viciously attack workers during the 1946 General Electric strike.

on being a world where bosses get everything and we have to fight like dogs to even survive? Or is it going to be a world where the people who do the work get the benefits of that work and control their own lives? The class struggle unionist answers "yes" to workers' control—of the workplace, of the unions, of our lives, of society. "Yes" to socialism.

Workers in Portugal right now are saying "yes" to workers' control. That's the real meaning of the controversy and turmoil going on in Portugal right now. Since the overthrow of fascism in 1974, many plants and offices have been taken over by Portuguese workers and are being run by them. They simply kicked the bosses out, and formed their own workers' commissions.

This means they set their own production; there are



Many Portuguese workers, like these women understand that only workers' revolution will insure a better life for us all.

no layoffs—it's simply not possible. If there isn't enough work, people repaint their plant, cut the grass, play cards, or just stay home and collect full pay! Workers in Portugal have carried class struggle unionism to its logical conclusion. They have begun to take control of their society.

In fighting for better wages and working conditions in the ways they fight, all class struggle unionists everywhere are preparing for the biggest fight of all. The fight for working people to run society—the fight that will end all fighting. The fight to kick out the bosses once and for all—a revolution to take it all over. To take it all over and build a world where there is no more fighting. A socialist world.

To win that socialist world, we will need a revolutionary party. A revolutionary party that will be composed of working people who are militants, fighters, class struggle unionists.

The members of the International Socialists are hard at work building that party right now, today. We are all class struggle unionists—we not only believe in the ideas of class struggle unionism, we **act** on those ideas. We are building local and national caucuses in the unions, putting out newsletters, leaflets our newspaper **Workers' Power**, and pamphlets like this one. We are actively trying to build an **organized** movement based on the principles of class struggle unionism. An organized movement that can make the final fight and win.

Join the I.S. And then let's get busy. We have a whole world to win.

# Workers' Power

WEEKLY NEWSPAPER OF THE INTERNATIONAL SOCIALISTS

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## Join the International Socialists



THE INTERNATIONAL SOCIALISTS is a national organization of working people. Our members work in auto plants, in warehouses, drive trucks, work in hospitals, repair phone lines, and much more. What is important is that we are all active. Fighting on the shop floor as well as in our unions.

WE BELIEVE working people should run society. Workers produce everything as well as do all of the work. Working people acting together have the power to run things. The International Socialists are about fighting for that power. The power to control our own lives!

IF YOU AGREE with our ideas and are willing to work towards them, then you should join the International Socialists. United together we have a world to win!

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